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Chairman: Mr. Suazo (Honduras)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 87: Environment and sustainable development *(continued)*

(b) International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (A/57/189 and A/57/190)

(d) Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (A/57/177)

(e) Convention on Biological Diversity (A/57/220)

(f) Further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (A/57/131 and A/57/444)

1. **Mr. Naidu** (Fiji), speaking on behalf of the member countries of the Pacific Islands Forum Group that were also Members of the United Nations, said that the ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Doha, the International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg had served as a forum for guiding the international community in its efforts towards achieving a more sustainable and equitable world. The paths proposed at those meetings must be merged into a coherent road map, because they had become intrinsically interrelated components in the quest for balance between economic development, social development and environmental protection.

2. The current and future well-being of the small Pacific States was dependent on the resources of the Pacific Ocean and on the stewardship of its biological diversity. That was why those countries shared a common responsibility for safeguarding their environment through sustainable development. To the countries of the region, sustainable development was a process which ensured that quality of life and quality of growth were achieved through good governance within limits acceptable to the island communities and without compromising the opportunities available to future generations.

3. Key issues for the Group under agenda item 87 had been covered in the Phnom Penh Regional Platform on Sustainable Development for Asia and the Pacific. Such issues included oceans, climate change, sustainable energy, conservation and management of natural resources, good governance, capacity-building, freshwater and financial resources.

4. The Pacific Islands Forum had incorporated those themes into specific priority plans of action for sustainable development in the region that it had submitted to the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Leaders of States in the region had also adopted a comprehensive Pacific Islands regional ocean policy that formed the basis for all ocean governance issues in the region. He hoped that new partners would participate in those initiatives.

5. Following the Johannesburg Summit, an inter-agency task force comprising regional experts from the Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific had been created to translate the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation into an appropriate regional strategy, the primary objective of which would be to strengthen national capacities in key sustainable development programme areas and strengthen the focus of interventions in order to promote long-term development.

6. In that regard, the Group strongly reiterated its commitment to Agenda 21, of which the Barbados Programme of Action was a concrete expression; together with the Millennium Declaration and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the Programme of Action embodied a number of principles and actions that the international community had adopted to advance the sustainable development of the small island developing States.

7. The Group had been pleased with the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, particularly the commitments with respect to oceans and small island developing States and the call for an international meeting in 2004 to comprehensively review the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. However, many fundamental issues might remain unresolved if the commitments made at the Summit were not honoured. The lack of opportunities due to the isolation and vulnerability of Pacific island countries continued to be an intractable problem, while environmental problems had intensified.

8. Overcoming the vulnerability of Pacific islands to the potential effects of natural disasters, environmental damage and global economic shocks was fundamental to the sustainable development of the region. Recommendations had been made at the recent conferences to address the social, economic and environmental challenges facing the developing world; it was time to merge them into a coherent global strategy and to deliver on the promises made.

9. **Mr. Ahmad** (Iraq) said that his delegation supported the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He recalled that the Johannesburg Summit had given rise to a Political Declaration which represented a concrete effort towards achieving sustainable development; much remained to be done, however, to implement the commitments made, particularly in the area of the environment.

10. For over 10 years, in flagrant violation of human rights and Security Council resolutions, his country had been the target of daily attacks by the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Those two States had used 800 tons of depleted uranium during the 1991 Gulf war, with horrifying consequences for the environment and human health. Aside from the thousands of victims, radioactive dust had polluted the air, water and soil. Following the use of those weapons, there had been a sharp increase in the number of cases of cancer, especially leukaemia, and of miscarriages, particularly in southern Iraq. More than 50,000 children had died and soldiers from the United States of America and elsewhere had been affected by the so-called Gulf war syndrome. At the same time, in the sanctions committee, the United States and United Kingdom representatives were blocking deliveries of drugs which would make it possible to treat those diseases.

11. His delegation had submitted a draft resolution on the effects of the use of depleted uranium in armaments to the First Committee (A/C.1/57/L.14) and hoped that all members would support it.

12. His Government fully supported the efforts of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and to promote international cooperation in order to meet the challenges facing the environment. The international community must work together and take responsibility for putting an end to the practices of certain hegemonic countries which showed disdain for international commitments, in particular those entered into at Rio. It was also necessary to implement the binding commitments entered into by the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, particularly those concerning greenhouse gas emissions, in accordance with Annex B to the Kyoto Protocol, and to implement a clean development mechanism.

13. **Mr. Kaviratne** (Sri Lanka) associated himself with the statement made by Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He expressed concern that natural and technological disasters were occurring more and more frequently worldwide and posing a growing threat to the world's population. In that context, he welcomed the recommendations made in the Johannesburg Political Declaration regarding the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

14. His country had extremely diverse ecosystems and rich fauna; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had classified some of its regions as World Heritage Sites. For that reason, his Government took conservation very seriously; numerous programmes had been implemented in that area and efforts were also being made to educate schoolchildren about the environment.

15. His Government had signed and ratified a number of international environmental agreements, such as the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol.

16. Within the framework of the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification, his Government was currently formulating a national action programme to combat land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought. The national land use policy had been drawn up in collaboration with all stakeholders and a national water policy was also being prepared.

17. Within the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity, a legal task force had been set up to prepare a draft law on the Convention's recommendations with a view to regulating access to genetic resources and ensuring the equitable sharing of their benefits and on the foreign transfer of biotic